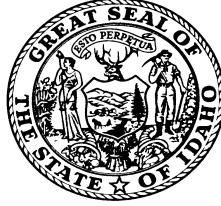


DISTRICT COURT
FIRST JUDICIAL DISTRICT
STATE OF IDAHO

JANET MESERVE
FAMILY COURT SERVICES
COORDINATOR
FOR
BENEWAH, BOUNDARY, BONNER,
KOOTENAI, SHOSHONE COUNTIES



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DATE: June 8, 2008

TO: CFCC Executive Board

FROM: Janet Meserve, Family Court Services Coordinator

RE: Report on Family Court Services Activity – First Judicial District

Dear CFCC Committee Members,

The following information is to update you on the activity in the First Judicial District. I have also included requests for support for several new programs I hope to implement in the upcoming year.

Highlights for 2007- 2008 year

A. SUPERVISED VISITATION

Our district hosted the statewide supervised visitation training. As FCSC in District 1, I was in charge of all aspects of conducting the training and all that entails. Viki Howard's expertise and direction were invaluable in setting this up. Recruiting new providers was important especially in the outlying areas. I was able to recruit one qualified individual to service Benewah and Shoshone counties. Two other individuals joined us in Bonner and Kootenai counties.

B. COMMUNITY RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

The Judges in my District requested that I investigate and provide them with information on available family resources. In response, I arranged monthly meetings in Bonner County between service organizations that help families and the judges. VAST, LOVE INC, Community Action, Mountain States Early Head Start, Head Start, Bonner Gospel Mission, and Life Skills are some of the organizations that presented at these brown bag meetings. The drug court coordinator and the domestic violence advocates were also invited to attend.

An initial draft of a resource directory for the area has been completed and is being expanded.

As FCSC, I also made presentations to the local Bar Association in Bonner and Kootenai Counties.

C. FOCUS ON THE CHILDREN

The parenting class continues to receive high evaluations in our area. I believe it is due to our excellent instructors, curriculum, and the participation of our judges.

D. MEDIATIONS

Funding requests for mediations have increased this fiscal year. I believe the increase is due to having a full time FCSC, along with Judges encouraging parents to seek less adversarial ways to resolve their cases.

E. UNIFIED FAMILY COURT

At the beginning of September 2007, the First Judicial District began screening cases in Kootenai County. The process began after Viki Howard and Judge Simpson attended a training in Baltimore Maryland.

According to the Family Court Review, Vol. 46 No. 2 article written by John M. Greacen, "The purest notion of the unified family court (UFC) is the assignment of all cases relating to members of a single family to a single judge so that all of the cases can be administered together. Joint administration of the cases will ensure that the judge will be aware of all of the other cases(including the facts developed in the course of those cases, the court orders entered in them, and treatment provided) in order to reach better informed decisions in each case, ensure consistency in orders and treatment programs for members of the same family, reduce the burden on the family of attending court on multiple matters and, ultimately, strengthen the family and improve the lives of its members so that they will all contribute positively to their community."

This process also allows judges to access resources to help these families that might not be available in their custody case.

Screening is triggered when an answer is filed in a divorce, custody, or modification case. Once an answer is filed, the FCSC screens the case, by checking the parties I-STARS records. I then prepare a report for the judges detailing all other pending cases involving this family and if there are any closed or open cases involving substance abuse or domestic violence. The Judge then decides if these cases should be consolidated or possibly coordinated.

Bonner County has requested screening in their district. Plans are being made to expand to Bonner County once the process has been refined and the screening process reviewed.

F. FAMILY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Dr. Simpson has completed her protocol for the Family Needs Assessment. To evaluate this project, the judges who utilized this tool were surveyed. Follow up on the outcomes post assessment were reviewed by the FCSC and will be presented at the next CFCC meeting.

The primary purpose of the Family Needs Assessment is not to make custody recommendations, but to provide parents and the court with recommendations and alternatives for resolving issues. The recommendations provided are designed to protect the child/ren from the negative impact of parental conflict and to provide resources that meet the family's needs.

The next step, if you choose to approve this project, will be to train additional providers throughout the state.

GOALS & REQUESTS FOR 2008-2009

- A. Settlement Day-** My goal is to set aside 1 day every 3 months for families to come to court and resolve their cases through mediation. We would have mediators, volunteer lawyers and a Judge available to put any mediated agreement on the record. I am working out the details of this program.
- B. Family Needs Assessment-** Training for new Assessors will need to be conducted to take this program state wide.
- C. Focus on the Children-** Expansion of a modified version of this class to Benewah and Shoshone counties would happen this next year. Plans are to start with the Judge speaking in these counties and just running the video at this time. Funds would be needed to purchase additional videos and books for these counties as we get them started. An initial request for \$3000 is being made for this expansion
- D. Children's Class-** Silver Linings- FCSC is planning on researching this program that is offered in the 6th District. After reviewing the curriculum, the next step will be to talk to North Idaho College inviting them to join as a partner, if appropriate, in providing this service to our area. If they agree, and Viki Howard gives her approval, I will make a presentation to the Judges regarding the program.
- E. IPTE-** This option is being explored in our district at this time.
- F. Funding-** More funding is needed for direct services for our area. The First District has grown over the last five years. The current budget of \$8800 per year is not enough to meet the needs of the First District. The First Judicial District is requesting additional funds in the amount of \$10,000 to pay for children and family needs assessment training so the program can be expanded beyond a pilot project. This additional funding

will also pay for mediators on “settlement day,” court ordered mediations, family needs assessments and supervised access and exchange services.

Thank you for your support. If you have any questions please don't hesitate to call me at 208-446-1179.

Respectfully submitted,

Janet Meserve
Family Court Services Coordinator